Farnsfield Gasworks

The Farnsfield Gas and Coke Company was set up after agreement was reached at a village meeting in March 1869. Land had been bought at the bottom of Quaker Lane and it was estimated that it would cost £1,500 to build. It was not universally supported and Dr Eaton, the village surgeon who lived in Vine Cottage on Quaker Lane, argued that that smell of gas was very unhealthy. Mr Porter, an engineer from Lincoln replied that he had much experience with gas works and had never known them to be a nuisance. Dr Eaton clearly lost the argument as the company was formed and about 60 shares were sold on the night.

A tender went out for the building of the gas works in September 1869 and in November an advertisement for a man 'thoroughly acquainted with the manufacture of gas and the management of gas works and meters'. Gas lighting was turned on in the village at the end of January 1870 and several shops were illuminated. The Farnsfield band paraded the village in honour of the event and church bells rang out.

An old gas lamp on Main Street near The Green in the early 1900s (photo)

Although the introduction of gas seems to have been welcomed by most, there were many complaints over the next few years about the high cost and intermittent supply. In 1874 the supply was not sufficient to illuminate the church or chapels which prompted a complaint to the Nottinghamshire Guardian. The complainant wrote that such a situation would be taken very seriously by the gas company Directors in the larger towns so why not in a village! The Farnsfield streetlights were paid for by subscription and there was a serious shortfall in funding in 1878. More shareholders needed to be found. Problems continued and on 6th July 1885 the Farnsfield Gas and Coke Company was wound up. William Straw, manufacturer of Farnsfield and George Kirkland, gentleman of Southwell were liquidators. The gas works, plant, associated buildings, street mains, services and apparatus for manufacturing gas plus the three tenements and gardens adjoining were put up for auction on 28th August 1885 at The Plough Inn, Farnsfield. It is unclear whether this resulted in a sale but in May 1901 the whole works and tenements as listed above were put up for auction again. The purchaser was a Mr Derbyshire who bought the entire auction lot for £450. This implies they were not in a particularly good state and in February 1902 a large number of trout in the River Greet died as a result of contamination from the Farnsfield gas works.

The production of gas continued and in the 1911 census the gas manager was Walter Castle. He lived in Vine Cottage with his wife Elizabeth and their three children. The garden at the back of the cottage backed onto the gasworks. A house has now been built on the site.
Next to Vine Cottage, on the bend of Quaker Lane is another modern house. This is the site of the old gasometer used to store gas.